

**Summary of Input and Recommendations of the State Rehabilitation Council;
Response of the Designated State Unit; and
Explanations for Rejection of Input or Recommendations
For 2008-2009**

- 1. SRC recommends that AZRSA keep SRC apprised through written or verbal means, on a quarterly basis, of progress regarding SRC VR State Plan Input and Recommendations including providing feasibility of recommendations made.**

Agency Response

The AZRSA agrees with this recommendation. The updates will be provided quarterly as part of the AZRSA State Administrator's report. The report will update the ongoing recommendations of the SRC as well as current activities of the AZRSA.

In regard to time sensitive information, AZRSA will forward to the SRC liaison for distribution to Council members.

- 2. SRC recommends that AZRSA continue efforts to improve and expand marketing and outreach of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program.**

Agency Response

The AZRSA agrees with this recommendation. As part of the recommendations from the previous state plan, AZRSA began work on a significant marketing campaign, which clearly reflected the vision and mission of the program.

To date, AZRSA has developed marketing materials which include brochures, large print brochures, Spanish Brochures, posters of varying sizes, banners for job fairs and other community events and other items. These materials were sent out to partner agencies, stakeholders, community rehabilitation providers as well as staff. Each of the AZRSA district and local offices continue to conduct outreach efforts within their communities.

AZRSA is currently in the process of developing a new orientation video, which will be available on DVD. It will be used in VR office orientations, given to partner agencies and other community rehabilitation partners. Part of this effort will include a DVD narrated by the AZRSA State Administrator giving a brief introduction to all programs of AZRSA. The SRC will be invited to participate in the continuing development of this project as it relates to reviewing footage and film editing.

4.2(c) Summary of SRC Input and Recommendations

AZRSA remains committed to outreach and marketing and will continue to make it a priority; however, future marketing and outreach activities may be impacted by the FY09 budget.

3. **SRC recommends AZRSA analyze the data obtained from the client satisfaction survey, the employee satisfaction survey, focus groups, public input hearings, and the Triennial Statewide Needs Assessment Project (SNAP) and develop an action plan to address the strengths and weaknesses identified. In addition, it is recommended that AZRSA provide data results to SRC, RSA staff statewide and VR Program participants including clients, providers and other stakeholders.**

Agency Response

AZRSA agrees with this recommendation. We continue to perform a variety of surveys to assess AZRSA's strengths and weaknesses. An employee satisfaction survey is conducted annually. Client satisfaction surveys are sent out on a weekly basis for reply. The results of the various surveys will be provided to the SRC through the State Administrator's report. The analysis of these surveys will be used as the basis to begin AZRSA's annual strategic planning process. The analysis of the SNAP will be available on the AZRSA website once completed.

4. **SRC recommends that AZRSA consider the development and implementation of a mentoring program to assist field staff at all levels in achieving consistent, quality service delivery statewide.**

Agency Response

AZRSA is considering and discussing the implementation of a mentoring program as a possible method to assist field staff. AZRSA believes this mentoring opportunity will contribute to the retention of vocational rehabilitation counselors as it will increase skill sets on both the mentor and mentee. It also provides professional growth opportunities for both parties.

This project will require further study prior to implementation. It will need to be determined whether to implement on a statewide basis or through a pilot with selected offices. Another issue to be discussed will be the incentives for the mentors and the availability of the means to provide incentives. The liaison to coordinate the project will need to be identified. It is currently being discussed as a project for the Counselor Advisory Committee to work in conjunction with the SRC.

Efforts to implement the mentoring program may be impacted by the FY09 budget.

- 5. SRC recommends that AZRSA obtain public input regarding the AZRSA Strategic Plan as well as communicating the Plan goals, objectives and action steps to all staff levels.**

Agency Response

Aspects of the AZRSA Strategic Plan are incorporated into various attachments in the State Plan. Public input was collected for the new State Plan that was submitted in FY2008.

AZRSA values public input and seeks it on a regular basis through focus groups, community forums and community partner meetings. The State Plan will be made available to the public and staff through the RSA internet and intranet.

- 6. SRC recommends that AZRSA take steps to ensure that counselors are providing informed choice in regards to service providers and service provision including clearly defining the nature of the relationship between counselors and service providers and service providers and clients.**

Agency Response

AZRSA agrees with this recommendation. Informed choice is a major training topic during our CORE training for new counselors. It is also discussed in the new policy manual in 13 different subchapters including AZRSA Service Principles, Timely Provision of VR Services, Definitions Important in Planning an IPE and Developing an IPE. Additionally, within the services section of the new policy manual is a subchapter devoted to informed choice.

AZRSA remains committed as part of our quality assurance efforts to ensure that clients are given opportunities for informed choice. Counselors are required to detail in their progress notes their efforts in informing their clients of options and choices available to them. Supervisory case reviews include the review of informed choice options being shared with clients.

Clients are encouraged to interview potential providers/contractors before making a decision as to who to work with.

AZRSA is waiting for the results of a pilot being conducted in another state on a Performance Report Card/Score Card for providers. If this pilot is successful, AZRSA would consider this for implementation in Arizona. A provider report card would allow clients the opportunity to see the evaluations of all providers and assist in making informed choices.

7. SRC recommends that AZRSA pursue the continuous monitoring and improvements outlined in the Federal Corrective Action Plan.

Agency Response

AZRSA agrees with this recommendation. Processes and procedures have been implemented for the continuous monitoring of any issues outlined in the Federal Corrective Action Plan for 2003 and 2004.

Based on the analysis of data collected from the monitoring, AZRSA will implement training and take other action as appropriate in order to meet the Federal Corrective Action Plan of 2003 and 2004. The Federal RSA representatives recently reviewed the Corrective Action Plan during their visit to Arizona. AZRSA expects to receive feedback in mid August. To date, no items have been closed out by Federal RSA.

As a result of the Federal Corrective Action Plan for 2003 and 2004, five Program Information Memorandums (PIMs) were issued to the field. They include: Client Contact Policy, Discontinuation of Partial Plans, Policy Exceptions to Service Limitations, IPE Extended Time Standard and Inquiry and Referral Response Time Standard Policy.

Further actions included the development of Institutes of Higher Education Agreements with community colleges and public universities. Those continue under development. In addition, AZRSA purchased a variety of vocational assessments that could be done by clients to assist in their choice of a vocational goal.

AZRSA instituted the case review process which includes individual case review teams going to offices as well as supervisory review which includes a supervisor reviewing 5 cases per quarter for each of the counselors.

AZRSA is working with Arizona Department of Education Exceptional Student Services and the Division of Developmental Disabilities to write a current Interagency Agreement to address the collaborative efforts of working with transitioning youth.

8. SRC continues to strongly recommend that AZRSA continue collaborative efforts regarding the provision of services, including promising practices, to transitioning youth in order to refine and expand service delivery options as it relates to the VR Program and the Department of Education policy/procedures. This should include BIA funded schools, charter schools and any other applicable entities.

Agency Response

4.2(c) Summary of SRC Input and Recommendations

AZRSA agrees with this recommendation to further refine and expand service delivery options as it relates to the VR Program. However, efforts to expand the transition program may be impacted by the FY09 budget.

Currently a new Interagency Governmental Agreement with the Arizona Department of Education Exceptional Student Services Division and the Division of Developmental Disabilities is being developed.

AZRSA staff have worked during the past year to develop Memorandums of Understanding with all public high schools in Arizona to outline collaborative efforts regarding students with disabilities. A Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor has been identified as a school liaison for each high school and is required to make monthly contact. These liaisons will participate in activities on school campuses to include open house nights, college nights, parent fairs and other informational events.

AZRSA will review the Transition IRI, as noted by the SRC, to identify promising practices that might be beneficial to Arizona students in transition. AZRSA staff is working within local communities to create a Community of Practice which involves school districts, local businesses, parents of students and students with disabilities, sister agencies and community service providers.

AZRSA continues to participate on the Arizona Transition Leadership Team. AZRSA has recently joined the Arizona Children's Executive Committee which is an interagency committee to foster collaboration related to transition and children's needs.

AZRSA continues to foster relationships with Disabled Student Services Departments on the various campuses in both the community college and public university system. AZRSA is currently developing Institute Of Higher Education agreements with these entities.

There is currently a pilot project starting in the summer for youth with visual impairments to provide comprehensive services in an effort to enhance transition to post secondary options.

AZRSA has a transition coordinator who actively works with schools and school districts around the state to promote and assure equal access for all transitioning students.

- 9. SRC recommends that AZRSA outreach to other disability populations, outside of existing third party agreements, to ensure that VR services are distributed more equitably statewide.**

Agency Response

AZRSA currently conducts outreach to other disability populations and will continue its outreach efforts to all potential applicants of the program through a variety of methods. They include town halls, consumer forums, community provider meetings, marketing brochures, and individual counselor outreach. The consumer forums were held in Showlow, Maricopa County, Nogales, Kingman, Prescott Valley, Sierra Vista, Yuma, Flagstaff and Tucson. The town halls for the deaf and hard of hearing clients were held in Maricopa and Yavapai County. More town halls are in the planning stages.

The Disability Program Navigators, in conjunction with other AZRSA staff, have been very active in participating in job fairs in both the Tucson and Phoenix areas. They have staffed accessibility booths which assist all job seekers requiring accommodations in the employment process at the job fair. This effort will continue.

AZRSA has outreached to the Veterans Administration Vocational Rehabilitation Department in an effort to serve returning military personnel who require services to return to employment.

10. SRC recommends that AZRSA continue its efforts to increase employee satisfaction and reduce staff turnover.

Agency Response

AZRSA has conducted an analysis of the results of the 2007 Employee Satisfaction Survey. As a result our top three priorities for increasing employee satisfaction are: staff recognition, supervision, and communication.

In addition, AZRSA has sponsored a number of employee recognition events and appreciation days. This practice will continue. Further, it is hoped that the mentoring program will increase employee satisfaction for both the mentee and the mentor.

Recent changes in channels of communication involving email, policy questions, policy implementation, finance questions and performance based contracting have resulted in a more streamlined approach to assisting and supporting staff.

11.SRC recommends that AZRSA continue efforts to implement and evaluate Performance Based Contracting to determine the impact it has on system outcomes in comparison to current contracting methodology.

Agency Response

AZRSA has contracted with a local firm to develop and implement surveys for employees, employers, contractors, and clients to determine and document their satisfaction with the performance based services and all aspects of the Pilot implementation. In addition an analysis will be conducted of the Pilot and traditionally compensated employment services to determine the most effective and efficient services for clients.

The results will be documented and presented to the AZRSA executive management team. This report will provide a basis for determination of future contracts.

12. SRC recommends AZRSA ensure that Federal Standards and Indicators related to employment outcomes are passed per federal guideline.

Agency Response

AZRSA agrees with this recommendation and remains committed to providing the resources for all federal standards and indicators to be met or exceeded.

Ongoing data analysis is conducted to monitor our efforts in this area and to assist AZRSA in developing strategies to meet or exceed these indicators.